**Maria and the Golden Slipper**

**Philippines**

Once there lived a couple who had an only daughter, Maria. When Maria was a little girl, her mother died. A few years later Maria's father fell in love with a widow named Juana, who had two daughters. The elder of these daughters was Rosa, and the younger was Damiana. When Maria was grown to be a young woman, her father married the woman Juana. Maria continued to live with her father and stepmother. But Juana and her two daughters treated Maria as a servant. She had to do all the work in the house: cook the food, wash the clothes, clean the floors. The only clothes she herself had to wear were ragged and dirty.

One day Prince Malecadel wanted to get married, so he gave a ball, to which he invited all the ladies in his kingdom. He said that the most beautiful of all was to be his wife.

When Damiana and Rosa knew that all the ladies were invited, they began to discuss what clothes they would wear to the ball; but poor Maria was in the river, washing the clothes. Maria was very sad and was weeping, for she had no clothes at all in which she could appear at the prince's fête.

While she was washing, a crab approached her, and said, "Why are you crying, Maria? Tell me the reason, for I am your mother."

Then Maria said to the crab, "I am treated by my aunt (*sic!*) and sisters as a servant; and there will be a ball tonight, but I have no clothes to wear."

While she was talking to the crab, Juana came up. The stepmother was very angry with Maria, and ordered her to catch the crab and cook it for their dinner. Maria seized the crab and carried it to the house. At first she did not want to cook it, for she knew that it was her mother; but Juana whipped her so hard, that at last she was forced to obey.

Before it was put in the earthen pot to be cooked, the crab said to Maria, "Maria, don't eat my flesh, but collect all my shell after I am eaten, and bury the pieces in the garden near the house. They will grow into a tree, and you can have what you want if you will only ask the tree for it."

After her parents had eaten the flesh of the crab, Maria collected all its shell and buried it in the garden. At twilight she saw a tree standing on the very spot where she had buried the shell.

When night came, Rosa and Damiana went to the ball, and Juana retired for the night as soon as her daughters were gone. When Maria saw that her aunt was sleeping, she went into the garden and asked the tree for what she wanted. The tree changed her clothes into very beautiful ones, and furnished her with a fine coach drawn by four fine horses, and a pair of golden slippers.

Before she left, the tree said to her, "You must be in your house before twelve o'clock. If you are not, your clothes will be changed into ragged, dirty ones again, and your coach will disappear."

After promising to remember the warning of the tree, Maria went to the ball, where she was received by the prince very graciously. All the ladies were astonished when they saw her; she was the most beautiful of all. Then she sat between her two sisters, but neither Rosa nor Damiana recognized her. The prince danced with her all the time. When Maria saw that it was half-past eleven, she bade farewell to the prince and all the ladies present, and went home. When she reached the garden, the tree changed her beautiful clothes back into her old ones, and the coach disappeared. Then she went to bed and to sleep. When her sisters came home, they told her of everything that had happened at the ball.

The next night the prince gave another ball. After Rosa and Damiana had dressed themselves in their best clothes and gone, Maria again went to the garden to ask for beautiful clothes. This time she was given a coach drawn by five (?) horses, and again the tree warned her to return before twelve. The prince was delighted to see her, and danced with her the whole evening. Maria was so enchanted that she forgot to notice the time. While she was dancing, she heard the clock striking twelve. She ran as fast as she could down stairs and out the palace door, but in her haste she dropped one of her golden slippers. This night she had to walk home, and in her old ragged clothes, too. One of her golden slippers she had with her; but the other, which she had dropped at the door, was found by one of the guards, who gave it to the prince. The guard said that the slipper had been lost by the beautiful lady who ran out of the palace when the clock was striking twelve.

Then the prince said to all the people present, "The lady whom this slipper fits is to be my wife."

The next morning the prince ordered one of his guards to carry the slipper to every house in the city to see if its owner could be found. The first house visited was the one in which Maria lived. Rosa tried to put the slipper on her foot, but her foot was much too big. Then Damiana put it on her foot, but her foot was too small. The two sisters tried and tried again to make the slipper fit, but in vain.

Then Maria told them that she would try, and see if the slipper would fit her foot; but her sisters said to her, "Your feet are very dirty. This golden slipper will not go on your foot, for your feet are larger than ours." And they laughed at her.

But the guard who had brought the slipper said, "Let her try. It is the prince's order that all shall try."

So he gave it to Maria. Then Maria put it on, and it fitted her foot exactly. She then drew the other slipper from underneath her dress, and put it on her other foot. When the two sisters saw the two slippers on Maria's feet, they almost fainted with astonishment.

So Maria became the wife of the prince, and from that time on she was very dear to her sisters and aunt.